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Turner's Hecklers Went too Far

The atmosphere greeting the director of the Central Intelligence Agency when he spoke at the University of Kentucky Wednesday night was reminiscent of the late 1960s.

Back then officials of the Johnson and Nixon administrations often found it difficult, if not impossible, to speak on university campuses. Anti-war demonstrators heckled and interrupted them continually.

Unfortunately, Stansfield Turner, the CIA director, ran into the same problem. Demonstrators delayed his speech for nearly 40 minutes.

Such behavior represents the antithesis of what a university should be. A university ought to be an open forum for ideas of all persuasions. Somehow in the confrontation of conflicting ideas the participants are all supposed to move closer to a better truth.

The demonstrators, mostly from the Iranian Students Association, were able to express their ideas Wednesday night. Prior to Turner's appearance they gathered in front of the student union, carrying placards with anti-CIA messages, and chanting anti-CIA slogans. They also passed out literature. University police made no gestures to stop these actions. The open forum was available to the demonstrators.

Turner, however, wasn't so fortunate. He found the open forum wasn't so open.

The Iranian students were within their rights in protesting Turner's appearance. Indeed, in an era in which students appear to be blasé about politics, it is good to see students protesting something. But they stepped out of bounds when they harassed Turner.